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ABSTRACT

In career guidance, advocacy and self-advocacy encompass a continuum from adviser action separately on behalf of a client, through shared activity, to action by the client alone. Wherever individual clients fall on the continuum, advocacy can be conducted in a manner that empowers them. Modeling is an important aspect of the process of empowerment across the advocacy/self-advocacy continuum. Career advisors can be active in ways that provide models clients can adopt. The national standards underpinning Britain's National Vocational Qualifications for guidance contain a five-stage model for advocacy: (1) explaining advocacy and agreeing that it is appropriate; (2) considering the client's options and agreeing which one to pursue; (3) preparing information and approaches, including contingencies for responses; (4) conducting advocacy in line with the client's wishes and preferences; and (5) ensuring understanding of and commitment to the outcomes of advocacy. According to a study of career services in England, career counselors are using advocacy as follows: address client's internal problems and external problems; partner with other agencies to help surmount barriers facing clients; help clients develop self-advocacy skills; and develop one-on-one mentoring relationships. Advocacy training for career counselors should focus on development of negotiating, motivational interviewing, and mentoring skills. (MN)

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NICEC

Briefing

ED 427 161

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Advocacy in Career Guidance

NICEC

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CRAC

The Careers Research and Advisory Centre is a registered educational charity and independent development agency founded in 1964. Its education and training programmes, publications and sponsored projects provide links between the worlds of education and employment. CRAC has sponsored NICEC since 1975.

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The work reported here was carried out under contract with the Department for Education and Employment. The views expressed in this Briefing do not necessarily reflect its views or the views of any other Government Department.

Advocacy is an old concept, and has long been recognised as an activity of career guidance. Most people are comfortable with the idea that it can be valuable, on occasion, for one person to speak on behalf of another in order to further their interests. The need for advocacy may arise from the particular influence or expertise that the advocate can offer, or from some perceived difficulty in the individual speaking for themselves.

Self-advocacy is a closely-linked concept. When individuals experience difficulty in getting their own message heard, this may arise from a lack of skill or understanding on their part, which could be addressed by supportive explanation or development of skills. The promotion of self-advocacy may take the form of assisting the individual in developing their voice and their message, or creating more receptive settings in which they can be heard.

This Briefing:

- examines the role of advocacy in the repertoire of career guidance practice;
- explores the issues it raises for roles and skills;
- outlines a model for advocacy and suggests an approach to training.

The Briefing is based on an enquiry undertaken by Lyn Barham and Jill Hoffbrand, both NICEC Fellows, for CfBT Bedfordshire and West London Careers Services. A copy of the resulting resource pack *(A New Look at Advocacy)* was sent to every careers service in England. The project was funded by DfEE as part of its programme to develop the Learning Card.

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ADVOCACY AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Advocacy and self-advocacy have been familiar concepts in social work and youth services for many years. Changes in education and in society over the last two decades have now led to the recognition of a small but significant group of people who are not enabled to benefit from normal education and training provision. Over time, they gain labels like 'at risk' and 'disaffected', and become unable to access education, training and employment without a significant helping hand – an advocate, or someone to support their development of the skills of self-advocacy.

This situation has been recognised in the 're-focusing' of the Careers Service and in the Gateway stage of New Deal. The organisations charged with supporting such people need to consider all the methods by which they can help them access their learning and employment opportunities. Advocacy requires attention within this repertoire of working methods.

> *'There is also an increasing requirement for an "advocacy" role for CS staff. This has implications for staff training and development.'* (DfEE: *Taking Forward Careers Service Focusing*, 1998)

LOCATING ADVOCACY

Advocacy and self-advocacy have a specific location within guidance. They rest at the point where there is some action to be taken. Once possible courses of action have been identified, someone – the client, the adviser, someone else? – has to do something to make things happen.

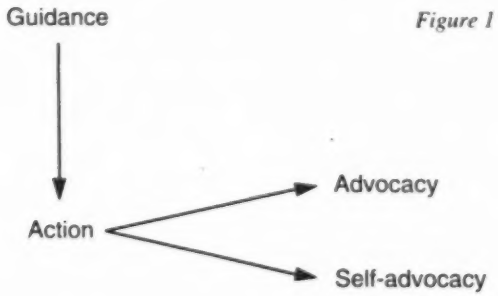

Figure 1

Careers advisers 'do things' for clients all the time. They rarely bother to call it advocacy because it is perceived as an integral activity of guidance. In 1986 the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) listed advocacy as one of the seven activities of guidance; its place there has not been challenged, but the concept has received little exploration in relation to best practice or training methods.

A SINGLE CONTINUUM

The terms advocacy and self-advocacy encompass a continuum, from adviser action separately on behalf of a client, through shared activity, to action by the client alone.

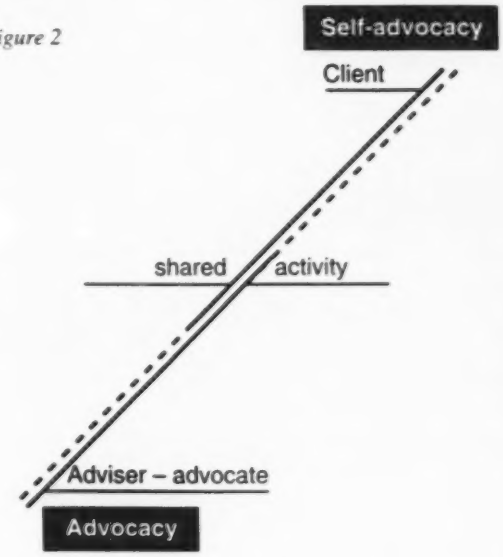

Figure 2

> *'Once they feel confident, they are often able to address all the issues listed with the minimum or no support from careers advisers.'*

EMPOWERMENT

Wherever on this continuum a particular example falls, it can be conducted in a way which empowers the client.

> *'It enables them to be in better position to help themselves.'*

Empowerment provides the direct connection between advocacy/self-advocacy and current best practice in career guidance.

Guidance is recognised as a learning process within which clients not only make a decision 'for now', but should be introduced to the skills of exploring themselves, exploring opportunities and making decisions. Users of guidance services should come to understand that guidance is supporting a career planning process which they may undertake repeatedly in their life, and that guidance can help them to gain skill in doing more of it for themselves.

> *'Young people are learning skills that they can use again and again and that they can take away and build on.'*

MODELLING

While empowerment is a widely agreed aim among guidance practitioners, it is not always clear what *actions* they might take to empower their clients.

An important aspect of the process of empowerment across the advocacy/self-advocacy continuum is *modelling*. The careers adviser can act in ways which provide models which the client can adopt. Some models are of behaviour; others are of the words and descriptions which can be used by the client. As with guidance processes generally, the more clearly the client is made aware of the processes, and led to understand that they can undertake these processes themselves, the greater the likelihood of effective learning. Thus:

- A careers adviser, preparing to speak for a client, agrees the objectives, prepares the words to use and looks at the scope for negotiation around the objectives. By doing this with the client, the client sees that this is *behaviour* which they could, in time, adopt themselves.
- When a careers adviser and client approach a third party together, the style of speech, explanation and *presentation* by the careers adviser serve as a model for the client.
- When a client acts alone as a self-advocate, the careers adviser can help to develop *strategies* by role-playing points for presentation and negotiating tactics.
- In writing descriptions and summaries of the client's achievements and aspirations, as is expected in action plans, the careers adviser models *language* which the client can use. A personal portrait, acknowledged and valued by a non-partisan adult, can offer a client new personal insight and confidence, and may be used as a base for helping the client identify ways to evidence their non-formal achievements.

INTEGRA project with ex-offenders (Shropshire Careers Services)

In close liaison with the Probation Service, the Integra project worker adopts a modelling approach to help her clients develop self-advocacy skills. By presenting to her clients what they have achieved, in language which has workplace currency, she offers them a model by which they can do this themselves. Writing personal information, such as in an action plan, offers a model for what clients can write for themselves. Clients gain power from preparing a personal portrait which is acknowledged and valued by someone who is seen as having credibility in the workplace.

The project worker also acts as an advocate for the needs of offenders as a group, both in addressing eligibility criteria for schemes and government programmes, but also in providing factual information, raising awareness, combatting myths and challenging stereotypes.

ROLES AND ROLE CONFLICTS

In adopting the advocacy role, it is helpful to identify what the client is 'borrowing' that they do not personally have. This may be:

- knowledge of processes and procedures ('the system');
- a position of comparative or apparent influence;
- communication and negotiation skills.

The advocacy role includes:

- the responsibility to do what the client wants, even if the advocate does not believe it is in their best interests;
- responsibility to act for the client, regardless of personal interests or the interests of the advocate's employer.

The possibility of role conflict exists, and needs to be tackled within training. Role conflicts may be:

- *Organisational:* where the interests of the organisation which the advocate is approaching may differ from those of their own organisation. A training provider operating within tight financial constraints may be concerned with likely training outcomes, whereas the careers adviser is concerned to meet the personal needs of a client.
- *Personal:* where the value system of the client and the careers adviser are profoundly different, and the careers adviser is asked to argue for something which they feel unable to support personally.
- *Professional:* where a client wants to act in person, but the advocate knows that they would have a greater chance of securing a better outcome. Such issues may occur for careers advisers with clients with special needs.

A MODEL FOR ADVOCACY

A five-stage model for advocacy appears in the national standards which underpin the Guidance NVQs. The five stages of this model emphasise the need for developing understanding and preparing for advocacy (stages 1-3) before undertaking advocacy (stage 4) and ensuring that the outcomes are understood as a basis for further action (stage 5).

Stage	*Activity*
1	Explaining advocacy; agreeing if it would be appropriate
2	Looking at the client's options and agreeing which option to pursue
3	Preparing information and approaches, including contingencies for responses
4	Conducting advocacy in line with the client's wishes and preferences
5	Ensuring understanding of and commitment to the outcomes of advocacy

PROMOTING SELF-ADVOCACY

By making options and activities explicit throughout the stages, the careers adviser can develop the client's understanding and capability for acting on their own behalf, immediately or in the future. Particular ways of empowering clients exist at different stages.

Stage 1

Exploring advocacy is one option; self-advocacy is another. Some clients may welcome a middle option where they are accompanied.

Stage 2

As in a guidance interview, assembling and evaluating options can be explored as a *process* as well as in terms of *content*. The careers adviser can reinforce that this is a process which the client can use in future.

Stage 3

Preparing arguments, information and evidence, even for informal advocacy, can be used as a model to show the client that by careful preparation they can present a stronger case.

Stage 4

If the client will be present, they can be encouraged to evaluate the ways in which the advocate presents issues – what works and what does not. If they are willing to speak, they gain skill and confidence for self-advocacy in the future. Negotiation can be seen as a skill to be learnt, not a chance event.

Stage 5

Here, and in stage 4, the client can see the value of clarifying and checking meaning and understanding. They can see the value of requesting clear commitment from others, and the need to offer commitments themselves.

USE OF ADVOCACY BY CAREERS SERVICES

The project centred on an enquiry into the use of advocacy by careers services in England. The information and insights this yielded both confirm and amplify the premises from which the project started out. The findings also demonstrate wide variation in the acceptance and use of advocacy as a guidance tool, in readiness to consider its relevance to current guidance practice, and in interest in addressing the implications through specific training.

CLIENT NEEDS

Advocacy was used to address a wide range of issues for many different clients. Issues cited ranged from internal factors such as lack of confidence and poor communication skills, to external problems like housing, option choice, relationships with parents and applications to college and university.

Between them, respondents named every possible client group from those obviously 'at risk' – young offenders, homeless young people, refugees and care leavers – to those actively seeking training and job opportunities or entry to further and higher education.

PARTNERSHIPS

The range and diversity of barriers faced by these client groups have given rise to some effective partnerships between careers services and many other agencies, with the potential for cross-fertilisation of professional practice. Examples include the Youth Service, Probation Service and Youth Justice, as well as many voluntary organisations.

PROJECTS

Much interesting and innovative work is being carried out, in many cases supported from a particular funding source such as the Single Regeneration Budget. Projects typically had an emphasis on developing self-advocacy skills in the context of the barriers faced by young people:

- in education, particularly with pupils judged to be underachieving or 'at risk';
- with non-attenders or those who relate better to activities not seen as school-based;
- post-education, for those who have not yet sought or gained entry to training or employment (ex-offenders and care leavers formed a significant proportion of these groups).

Detailed examples are given in Section Two of the resource pack, and are supported by a range of case studies in Section Three.

MENTORING AND ADVOCACY

The almost universal inclusion of mentoring in work with the disaffected, including careers advisers as mentors, requires some examination. One aim, at the outset of this enquiry, was to disentangle some of the blurred meanings attached to mentoring and advocacy.

The distinction could be considered one of *orientation*. Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship which essentially 'faces inwards': the mentor's purpose is to offer motivation, non-

judgemental support, a positive role model. Advocacy, on the other hand, essentially 'faces outwards', since the purpose of the advocate is to engage with other agencies on the client's behalf. Occasionally, a mentor may need to adopt an advocacy role within the mentoring relationship, adding 'opening doors' to the repertoire of functions. It is when the mentor is a careers adviser that the two meanings can become blurred, since this dual role combines the main characteristics of both – with potentially powerful effects, as demonstrated in the evaluation of the Mentoring Action Project (see NICEC Briefing on *Career Guidance Mentoring for Disengaged Young People*).

CLIENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Advocacy

For special needs careers advisers, advocacy is regarded as an 'everyday' function. They describe their efforts to support young people in achieving a successful transition from school to post-school opportunities. Addressing the lack of access to funding or suitable provision requires advocacy, as does the transition review situation, where young people can feel powerless:

> *'Not so much speaking for them, but creating space for them to speak.'*

Examples were given of projects to raise young people's self-confidence and help them make their views known.

Hillcrest School Opportunities Convention

An opportunities convention, held at a Bedfordshire school for students with severe learning difficulties, was initiated by the careers adviser but largely organised by the students themselves. Together they invited colleges locally and nationally, and different types of social services provision. They were able to see at first hand the kinds of options open to them as well as meeting former students who had gone on to different colleges and centres.

Preparations carried out in PSE lessons not only helped students to plan how to make the best use of the occasion in thinking about their own futures: they also involved them in deciding who would help behind the scenes, organising reception and refreshments stands. Active participation in organising this event enhanced self-esteem and encouraged self-advocacy skills in a client group too often aware only of the options closed to them.

Case conferences are a feature of progression through life for clients with additional needs. Well-intentioned professionals can forget to listen to the client's voice.

> *'There are so many professionals involved, speaking to them, about them and for them, that the opinions of the client are often lost. People hate silence in an interview; if a client takes 30 seconds to gather themselves for a response, this is too long for some people and they talk themselves to fill the gap!'*

Assertiveness skills are needed by the advocate to create space for the client's voice and views to be heard. The advocate may also use negotiation skills, and a comprehensive knowledge of opportunity and financial structures, for the client's benefit.

Self-advocacy

In many parts of the country there are self-advocacy groups organised by or for people with particular needs, especially those with learning difficulties. Within the Careers Service there are projects which support such young people in developing the skills of self-advocacy.

WHO LISTENS TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

Suggesting that young self-advocates need adults with 'listening ears', the enquiry asked whether careers services did anything to focus opportunity providers' attention on listening to young people. In accepting that many opportunity providers' response to young people referred from outside what they consider the 'normal' range can be unreceptive, careers services gave examples of the strategies they have adopted or are developing to encourage a 'listening ears' approach:

- meetings set up between the careers adviser, training provider and individual young person (*'to give them a chance to say what they think would benefit them'*);
- an employment project for unemployed young people with learning difficulties – a group of employers and clients brought together to discuss desirable placements and ways that clients would like to be treated;
- arranging for local decision-makers and opportunity providers to meet with groups of young people to listen and respond to their views;
- a meeting of clients from different parts of the county to ask them about information needs and how these might be met: the careers service ('listening ears' in this case) will produce a report for the TEC, and then start trying to address the needs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There appears to have been no provision of specific training in advocacy skills, to judge from careers service comments (*'Not since my DCG and even then ...'*).

While many examples are given of other training with a possible relevance to advocacy –

- negotiating skills,
- motivational interviewing,
- mentor training (for MAP / Stepping Stones),

– several comments suggest that training in this particular area is becoming necessary and would be appreciated (*'Structured training in advocacy would be invaluable'*).

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREERS SERVICES

There are two main implications for careers services arising from this 'new look at advocacy'. One relates to the skills and professional development of staff; the other to the careers service's role in helping the voices of young people individually, and the perspective of young people in general, to be heard by opportunity providers and local strategic planners.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While the need for staff development is noted in this enquiry and from DfEE consultations, it is important to recognise that careers advisers in general have the skills needed for effective advocacy. Training should increase the range of application of those skills to include the issues arising in advocacy, and create a framework of understanding which addresses the particular responsibilities of advocacy and the distinctive features of the advocate-client relationship. Possible role conflicts should also be explored.

The resource pack offers materials which together support a full day's training, but from which sessions could be extracted to suit particular training needs. The seven sections of the training materials cover:

- Defining advocacy; experiencing speaking for another person and having someone speak on your behalf.
- The reasons why advocacy may be necessary within the careers adviser's role.
- Types and stages of advocacy, including the five-stage model described earlier.
- Negotiating skills, covering both a framework for preparing and undertaking negotiation and a reference to assertiveness skills.
- Advocacy relationships; exploring issues such as trust, dependency, attitudes and prejudices.
- Role boundaries and role conflicts, explored through case study material, and the question of organisational policy to support staff undertaking advocacy.
- Continued professional development in the use of advocacy skills.

ADULTS WITH 'LISTENING EARS'

Supporting clients in enhancing their skill and understanding builds one of the pillars of effective self-advocacy; without the other pillar of a person willing to listen, such effort is wasted. Guidance services need to develop strategies to ensure that opportunity providers will listen to those who can easily be ignored as 'too much trouble'. They need also to remember their own responsibility to offer 'listening ears' to all sectors of their client group.

There is scope for developing further strategic work with opportunity providers, to ensure that young self-advocates get a hearing.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The full report of this project, *A New Look at Advocacy*, consists of a resource pack in six sections:

- What is advocacy
- The enquiry
- Case studies
- Training
- Resources and references
- Research documentation

A disk version of the pack in Word 6 format is obtainable from the General Manager, CfBT Bedfordshire Careers, Luton Careers Centre, Link House, 49 Alma Street, Luton LU1 2PL. Copies are free to careers services, and cost £10 (including postage and packing) to other organisations.

Further copies of this Briefing are available from NICEC, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX, on receipt of an A4 stamped (20p for one or two copies, 31p for up to four copies, 38p for up to six copies) and addressed envelope.

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